ONTARIO HERITAGE TRUST

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Heritage Matters

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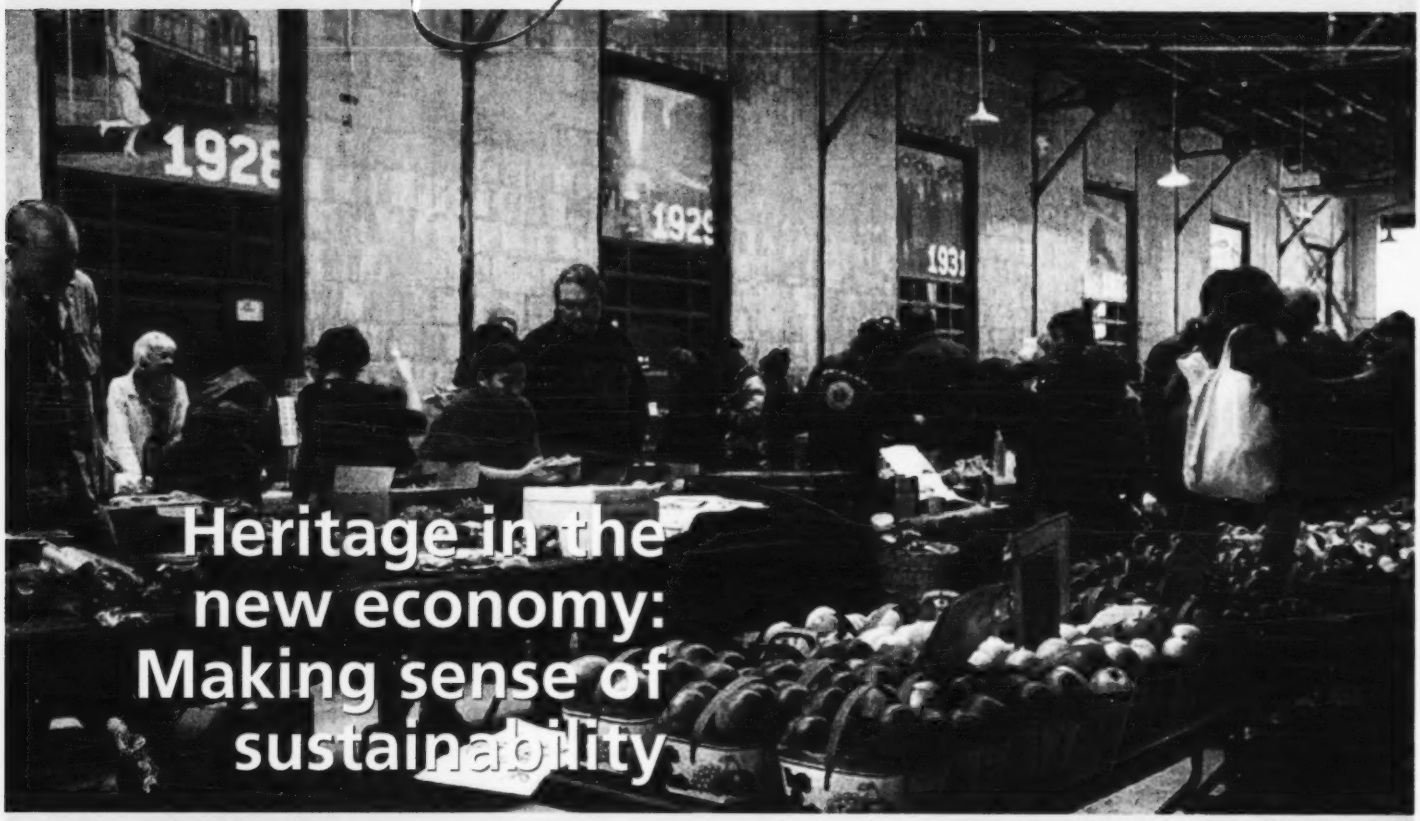

Heritage in the new economy: Making sense of sustainability

In this issue –

Subsidized demolition

100-mile conservation

Discarding the past

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A message from The Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander, Chairman

Photo courtesy of Janet Kimber, the Toronto Star

Ontario is fortunate to have some remarkable heritage buildings. Just visit any community participating in Doors Open Ontario, for instance, and you will witness heritage at its best – with outstanding community volunteers conducting guided tours and showing off their buildings with obvious and glowing pride.

But imagine a landscape devoid of its heritage – a stroll through small-town Ontario without its Victorian or Edwardian houses, a hike without its pristine forests and wetlands. As more and more heritage buildings are demolished and dumped into landfill, we empty our landscapes of these precious heritage treasures. What defines us as a people becomes diminished.

With each passing year, it becomes increasingly important to find ways of sustaining our heritage. Keeping our heritage alive also has many implications on our economy. Keeping debris out of landfill, using local materials and labour for restoration projects, adapting and reusing heritage sites for new and exciting ventures – these are not only good habits for these economic times, but also from a global sustainability perspective.

As you read these articles, think about the buildings you've lost in your communities, and imagine how different your skyline would be if these buildings had been carefully and lovingly restored and not quickly and heedlessly destroyed. The next time you hear a bird call along a trail, imagine how that call could be silenced if this natural heritage site becomes clogged with construction debris.

The careful attention we bring to the recycling of our household waste is commendable. Doesn't it make sense to treat our heritage with the same respect?

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Cover: The Wychwood Barns covered street is a popular weekly Saturday farmers' market in Toronto.
Photo courtesy of Audrey Kitte, du Toit Architects Limited.

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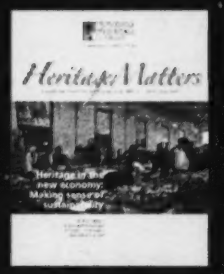

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Ontario

Communities leading conservation

By Catrina Colne

Last year, the Ontario Heritage Trust and The Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, established the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Community Leadership to recognize communities for exemplary leadership in heritage conservation and promotion.

In February 2009, the Lieutenant Governor presented the first awards at a special Queen's Park ceremony during Heritage Week. The recipients, based on population size in each of four categories, were:

The Town of Markham has preserved much of the community's cultural and natural heritage, despite development pressures. Since its Municipal Heritage Committee was created, Markham has designated over 250 properties under the Ontario Heritage Act, as well as three Heritage Conservation Districts. The town has protected and restored municipally owned properties, offers incentive programs to owners of designated properties, and has implemented strategies to preserve and renew natural heritage.

The Town of Perth has set a standard of excellence in heritage conservation. Its Municipal Heritage Committee was instrumental in designating 37 properties under the Ontario Heritage Act and owners of designated properties are eligible for a restoration grant program. The town has restored several municipally owned and designated properties, and Perth's Official Plan provides mechanisms for conserving heritage. Perth also has a number of green initiatives to protect natural resources.

The Municipality of Port Hope recognizes the importance of heritage in social and economic development. Since its Municipal Heritage Committee was established, over 176 properties as well as two Heritage Conservation Districts have been designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. The municipality offers property tax deferrals and grant programs for owners of designated commercial properties, and has policies for protecting heritage properties, natural landscapes and archaeological sites.

The City of Kingston continues to develop innovative heritage policies to proactively preserve its heritage resources. The city helped develop the Kingston Act (1970) to protect heritage properties prior to the creation of the Ontario Heritage Act. Home to one of Ontario's oldest Municipal Heritage Committees, Kingston has over 625 properties designated under the Ontario Heritage Act and more than 90 identified archaeological sites.

The Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Awards recognize achievements in conservation in three categories: Youth Achievement, Lifetime Achievement and Community Leadership. They are awarded through the Ontario Heritage Trust's annual recognition programs:

- The Young Heritage Leaders program helps schools and communities recognize exceptional young people working to preserve local heritage.
- The Heritage Community Recognition Program celebrates individuals and groups of volunteers for heritage conservation activities.
- The Community Leadership Program honours communities with a proven track record of heritage conservation and promotion.

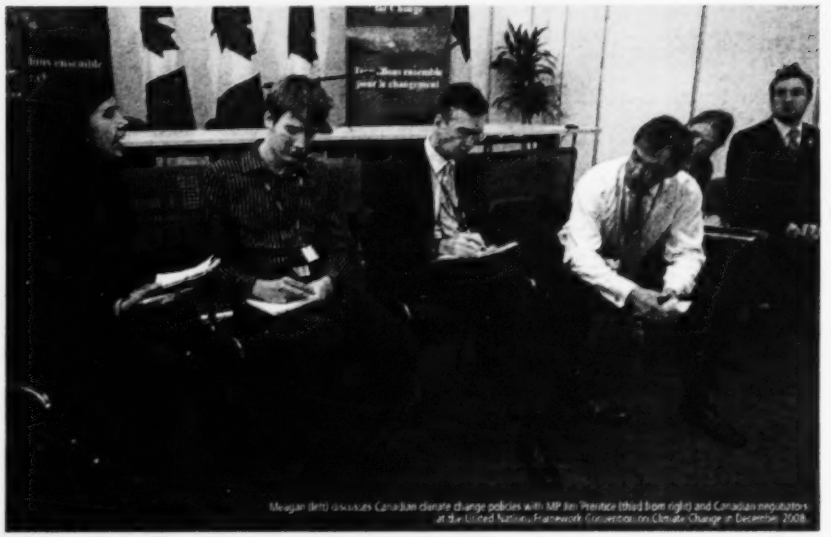
This year's nomination deadline for these programs is July 17, 2009. The guidelines are available at www.heritagetrust.on.ca.

Four additional communities received honourable mentions for their achievements: the Village of Manotick, the City of Thorold, the Town of Aurora and the City of Hamilton.

Catrina Colne is a Marketing and Communications Coordinator with the Ontario Heritage Trust.

Working for change

By Meagan McKeen



Meagan (left) discusses Canadian climate change policies with MP Jim Prentice (third from right) and Canadian negotiators at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2008.

Protecting the environment and natural heritage has become an important part of my life over the past few years. While busy as a Grade 12 student at Oakville's Abbey Park High School, I have become actively involved in environmental initiatives – internationally, nationally and in my own community.

On a global scale, I participated in a program called the International Climate Champions (ICC) for which I travelled to London, England to work with 36 other students from the G8+5 countries. We created a statement representing the international youth voice on climate change, while challenging world leaders to take ambitious steps toward cutting carbon emissions. In May, we presented this statement for the G8 Environment Ministers Climate Summit in Kobe, Japan.

> "People who say the youth are the leaders of tomorrow are wrong. The youth are the leaders of today."
> Meagan McKeen

This year, my international work extended to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Poland. At this conference, young Canadians worked with our Environment Minister, Jim Prentice, to encourage him to agree to acceptable emission reduction targets.

As a result of the programs in London and Japan, I helped to launch a Canadian program called ICCommit. More than 15,000 students across the country were involved in making and keeping their own personal environmental commitments.

After experiencing environmental activism on many levels, I have come to realize that the most important work I do is within my own community. Through Oakville Green, I help to organize a group of students to plant 200 trees and shrubs in Oakville each fall and spring. I also worked with Oakville Green on a project to enact a bylaw that bans the use of cosmetic pesticides. I spoke as the youngest delegate at the town council debate. As a result of my efforts and those of my colleagues, the bylaw was enacted months later.

In order to share my experiences, I spoke as the keynote speaker at the Hamilton Community Foundation's youth environment conference: Living the Environment. My speech focused on youth empowerment and the ability of young people to make changes in the world. I have also given presentations on protecting the environment to both high school and elementary students across the school board. By reaching out to students, who are the next generation of world leaders, I help to bring sustainability to my community.

Meagan McKeen was the 2008 recipient of the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Youth Achievement and the Young Heritage Leaders Scholarship.

The sustainability of Place

By Erin Semande

Located on the Lake Huron shore at the mouth of the Maitland River, Goderich is known as "Canada's Prettiest Town." It is situated in what was formally the Huron Tract, a large parcel of land owned by the Canada Company, a colonization firm established in 1826. John Galt, company superintendent, laid out the town's iconic octagonal-shaped "square" and radial street plan. For almost 150 years, the Square has been the commercial and community hub of Goderich by providing a marketplace, park, courthouse, shops, restaurants and events venue.

The urban history of Goderich demonstrates how heritage preservation can instil a sense of place for a community. Protecting and maintaining heritage has made for a town full of character and charm. This town of about 8,000 has developed sensibly and sustainably since its incorporation in 1850.

Goderich has approximately 300 heritage properties in its inventory, two heritage conservation districts (HCDs) and funding incentives for designated properties. The majority of these historic properties perform their original functions as homes, churches and commercial buildings.

Other buildings have found a new life through adaptive reuse. In 1961, when a new post office was built, the former Thomas Fuller-designed post office (1893) became the Town Hall, which was protected by an Ontario Heritage Trust conservation easement in 1981. In 2009, the Town has again chosen to reinvest in this historic structure by restoring the exterior, rehabilitating the interior, and adding a sympathetic extension.

Through heritage walking tours, hiking trails and museums and galleries, Goderich's important sites are kept alive by telling stories that connect people to their past. The Huron Historic Gaol (1839-42) is designated a National Historic Site. The landmark structure operates as a museum that welcomes tourists and school groups while interpreting 19th-century prison life. Built in stages from the 1840s to 1878, the Livery Stable was slated for demolition in the late 1970s. Showing leadership, Goderich council stalled demolition, which gave the community time to organize, raise resources and adapt the building into The Livery, a non-profit theatre and arts centre. Another cultural node, the 1907 Canadian Pacific Railway Station hosts the Goderich Arts Club's Annual Exhibition and is used as the lead point for numerous hiking and biking trails as well as the "Marine Heritage Walk."

Goderich is a model for how heritage preservation can benefit a community. By infusing its heritage buildings with cultural activities, the Town of Goderich has sustained a cohesive sense of place, which contributes to a distinctively intimate urban character and rich quality of life.

Erin Semande is the Places of Worship Researcher with the Ontario Heritage Trust.

"As commerce grew in the mid-1800s, shops, hotels and opera houses filled in the "pre-planned" design envisioned for the town[]," says Municipal Councillor Heather Lyons. "People enjoyed living near, or in the same building, where they worked. Today, underused spaces and a few prime vacant lots within the core area present the timely potential for revitalization and sympathetic development of multiple residential units in the historic shopping, business and entertainment district."

The Huron Historic Gaol (1839-42) is designated a National Historic Site

Heritage in harmony: The integration of natural and cultural landscapes

By Lorraine Chesterfield and Kim Arvanitakis

The heart of the Ruthven estate is the restored 2½-storey limestone Greek Revival style mansion

Approximately 11,000 years of human culture are recorded in Ontario's landscapes. Most existing natural landscapes in Ontario today have intrinsic cultural heritage meaning and significance. Over time, the natural and cultural heritage features in many landscapes have been lost to development. Only now are we discovering the complex history of these sites.

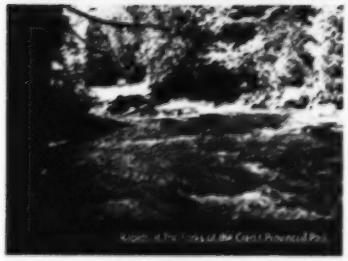
Large tracts of land that have both natural and cultural value are held by provincial parks, conservation authorities and land trusts. An excellent example of this integration is Ruthven Park, a 1,600-acre (647-hectare) property in the village of Cayuga on the Grand River. A National Historic Site, Ruthven was constructed in 1845 for politician and businessman David Thompson and served as the family home for five generations. It stands as a rare example of Classical architecture and picturesque landscape that characterized country estates of the late 19th and early 19th centuries. The heart of the estate is a two-and-a-half storey limestone mansion with a two-bay temple façade – an excellent example of the Greek Revival style. Ruthven has been preserved through the efforts of the Haldimand County Grand River Land Trust.

The Ontario Heritage Trust holds a conservation easement that protects both the cultural and natural heritage features of the property. Approximately 400 acres (162 hectares) are designated as a provincial Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI). Part of the property is also located within the North Cayuga Slough forest, which is an important part of the Carolinian ecosystem. Over 485 vascular plants have been documented here, of which seven are provincially rare. The forest represents one of the largest forests left in the Carolinian Zone. The wildlife habitat found at Ruthven also supports a variety of flora and fauna.

Ruthven also has significant archaeological resources. The Grand River was an attractive site for Aboriginal occupation, especially from 6000 BCE to 1000 CE. Ruthven has 33 registered archaeological sites that provide evidence of 8,000 years of human occupation on the property – with a high potential for further discoveries.

Another area where both natural and cultural heritage resources are being stewarded in harmony is The Forks of the Credit. The area – situated on the Niagara Escarpment in Belfountain – contains prominent features associated with the escarpment, such as waterfalls, rivers, rock faces and steep slopes. The west branch of the Credit River joins the main Credit in the steep valley where freshwater springs flow from the valley walls. The cold ▶

Part of Ruthven Park is located within the North Cayuga Slough Forest – an important part of the Carolinian ecosystem



Kayaks at the Forks of the Credit Provincial Park

The Hoffman Kiln, with its massive stone blocks, serves as a poignant reminder of this era

spring-fed waters of the West Credit provide habitat to brown and brook trout. The valley is heavily treed with forests of cedar, oak, maple and birch, and is rich in wildlife, the area is a provincially significant life science ANSI.

The rich natural and geological features of the Forks of Credit led to a boom in quarrying of limestone and sandstone in the late 19th century. The limestone deposits were excavated and burnt in kilns to make mortar. The sandstone deposits, however, could not be excavated in open pits because of the thick layers of limestone overlaying the sandstone. Instead, quarry operators were forced to mine the sandstone underground. This is the only known location of underground mining of sandstone in Ontario. The quality and colour of the sandstone were coveted and led to its use in the construction of Ontario's legislative buildings at Queen's Park. Echoes of this industrial past – such as the Hoffman Kiln, railway tracks and retaining walls – still exist throughout the Forks of the Credit. The Hoffman Kiln, with its massive stone blocks, serves as a poignant reminder of this era.

The Forks of the Credit area is owned and managed by a number of organizations, including the Credit Valley Conservation Authority, Ontario Parks, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Bruce Trail Conservancy and the Trust, who all work together to ensure the conservation of the area. The unique cultural and natural features found here have attracted people for many years. The Bruce Trail, the Elora-Cataract Trailway and the Trans-Canada Trail are widely used by the public; the cultural heritage elements provide further points of interest along the route.

Ruthven Park and the Forks of the Credit are just two examples of the commitment of the Trust and its partners to taking an integrated approach to the conservation of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage.

Tamara Chipperfield is a Natural Heritage Consultant with the Trust. Kik Aravopoulos is the Trust's Easements Program Coordinator.

SUBSIDIZING DEMOLITION

By Sean Pigott

Demolition of the Lakeview Power Generating Station, Mississauga, Ontario, 2002

In nature, there is no such thing as waste. Nature operates in an endless web of interconnected cycles of use, transformation and reuse. The concept of waste is uniquely human. We partition the land and its resources into two distinct groups: the unwanted, which is discarded, and the wanted or useful. Strangely enough, resources tend to migrate between these categories on a regular basis. In fact, this migration is central to our current economy.

Not only have humans created the notion of waste and have grown to accept it, but we have also positioned waste as a necessary by-product of growth and development. Waste and pollution are being created faster than the earth can naturally absorb, recycle or accommodate them. In our approach to the planet, we use economic arguments to justify the extraction of resources and the management of nature itself. Only by redesigning our economic model to mimic the cycles of nature can we overcome our current destructive pattern of waste.

But what does this have to do with cultural heritage conservation? Everything! The natural cycle we are looking for is rooted in the conservation ethic, and not limited to natural and cultural heritage. Conservation is the blueprint for a sustainable civilization. We need to integrate, rather than isolate, our economic systems with the natural ecological systems of the planet.

Complete and effective conservation is impossible through the segregated approach that has been applied to the environment since before the Industrial Revolution. The idea that we cherish some portions of the planet above others means there are some portions we abandon. The earth is a closed, yet interconnected system where nothing can be added or removed. Simply put, we have to live within our means, treat all resources and land as precious and reinvent our economy to meet this objective.

Because it is so heavily subsidized, waste disposal is an affordable option that drives decision making for land-use planning, architectural design and heritage conservation. The impact and full cost of inefficient resource management is being deferred. For the most part, the demolition of buildings is undertaken for perceived economic reasons and expediency. It is cheap, easy and culturally acceptable.

Last year, waste generated from construction and demolition in Ontario accounted for 30 per cent (3.9 million tonnes) of the non-hazardous, inactive material being directed into landfills. This is 3% per cent more than all of the household waste diverted from landfill. Although blue box programs, Ontario has a major landfill capacity shortfall for decades. As the population grows – and as we continue to demolish old and build new – we are creating a massive environmental deficit.

In the face of waste management challenges, Ontarians strive to reduce, reuse and recycle. Blue box programs are commonplace in communities larger than 5,000 people. There are no similar requirements, programs or support, however, for recycling in the construction and demolition industries. The fees charged at landfill sites range around $50 per tonne – and are often much less in nearby places such as Michigan, where massive private landfills operate under less stringent environmental regulations.

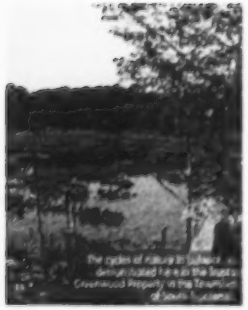
The policy of managing waste locally and recycling are often at odds. It is no secret that blue box material from Ontario is shipped to Asia for sorting and then shipped back. This process will remain environmentally absurd yet economically viable until our local recycling industry develops enough capacity to handle our waste. Regulations, incentives or taxes must also be introduced to encourage local comprehensive recycling. Also, markets must be developed for the recyclables and/or until our waste production drops dramatically.

Let's examine what this means for the conservation of heritage buildings.

A case study in waste

It's 1909 and an ambitious young Irish couple, residential real estate developers in Anytown, Ontario, A successful businessman, Mr. Smith, has just built a new house for his family. It is a stylish, ▶

SUBSIDIZING DEMOLITION



The cycles of nature in balance – demonstrated here in the layers of Groundwood Pergola in the Toronto Garden of South Lucania.

Toronto's James Cooper House, shown here, will be preserved. But subsidized demolition continues to threaten many other heritage buildings across Canada.

detached, brick building rising two-and-a-half-storeys. A mansard roof, clad with slate and pierced with elaborate dormers, is framed with old-growth white pine. The hand-rendered plaster walls and ceilings, appointed with fine mouldings and medallions, have just been painted rich Victorian colours. The smell of fresh linseed oil wafts through the hardwood halls and the millwork is treated with [illegible] to a timeless, low sheen. The structure is almost entirely composed of local materials, assembled on site with great skill, thoughtfulness and attention to detail. The gross floor area is an ample 223 square metres (2,500 square feet), the ceilings soar over three metres (10 feet), providing natural light and superb cross-ventilation through double-hung wood-sash windows.

Mr. Smith knows his house is well built and the envy of his neighbours. What he does not know is that someday his house will be considered to have cultural heritage value, and could even be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. In addition, his house weighs over 100 tonnes and possesses about 1.75 million Mega British thermal units of embodied energy – the equivalent of about 63,500 litres of gasoline.

In 2009, the Smith House is in the centre of a bustling city. Saplings planted after the First World War have become massive shade trees. The once-quiet residential block is now a mosaic of multi-use infill and re-muddings of earlier buildings. The residence appears relatively modest on the street and has become dog-eared and warning for maintenance. Yet, the basic attributes remain intact – serviceable and brimming with architectural potential – a dusty gem on a street that has been deemed ripe for intensification.

Should a new owner wish to realize the site's potential, in the above scenario, the most common outcome would be razing the house and shipping it to a landfill in Michigan, with an ill-proportioned and architecturally disappointing building erected in its place. Disposal of this house would require about 1,000 litres of diesel, 20 dump-truck loads and would cost less than $20,000. Landfill tipping fees account for less than a third of this cost. The demolition permit is a mere $170. Most significantly, this result appears to make economic sense. Anything else would be bad business and would not reflect the highest and best use for the property.

Clearly, something is dreadfully wrong with this scenario. We are subsidizing the cost of new construction and exporting or mortgaging the costs of demolition at the expense of our cultural heritage, urban landscape and environment. Worse still, our replacement buildings aren't nearly as durable or inherently sustainable as those they are replacing. The industry model for life-cycle costing seems to be about the length of a mortgage (i.e., 25 to 40 years). Our architecture becomes disposable and our pattern of living more linear than cyclical, an exponentially unsustainable and short-sighted perspective. The [illegible] and our [illegible] are producing a bill that the planet can ill afford to pay.

It is understood and broadly accepted that we recycle our household "waste," which costs most municipalities about $160 per tonne. Shouldn't demolition waste be held to the same standard? If we change our cost variables to reflect the real cost of demolition, do we not alter the fate of the Smith House? Dismantling the building instead of knocking it down requires significantly more labour, planning, time and cost. The tipping fees become the cost of recycling, and rise about three-fold. In this revised model, our permit fee would be increased 50 times, similar to that used for building permits in order to ensure worker safety. We would require an environmental review regardless of building size (the current threshold is 2,000 square metres). Add government support ▶

The Low Street Church, Bridgetown, 2004. Image courtesy of Professor Malcolm Thurlby.

such as a landfill tax – like the £32 per tonne landfill tax in the United Kingdom – and the numbers begin to change. In this revised scenario, the cost to dismantle and locally recycle the Smith House could be well over $100,000. Given a choice between this price tag and reinvesting in an existing building – be it a heritage property or otherwise – many owners would consider preservation as the more fiscally sound option.

Of course the goal is not to dismantle heritage buildings at all, but to retain them in their entirety and reuse them in situ. If the cost of demolition increased fivefold, would the Smith House be preserved for financial reasons alone? Certainly, there are other factors to consider – such as condition, integrity, development potential, political support, use and heritage significance. Nonetheless, if traditional landfills become financially unfeasible and local recycling implemented and enforced, we wouldn't see nearly as many viable buildings removed or replaced.

There are other benefits to achieving this shift to ecological commerce. It would lead to more thoughtful architectural design and durable construction with less impact on our natural and agricultural lands. Moreover, this would transform our linear economy, which relies on waste and wholesale replacement, into an ecology of labour-intensive local services, resource stewardship and environmental renewal inspired by the cycles of nature.

Sean Fraser is the Manager of Acquisitions and Conservation Services at the Ontario Heritage Trust.

TRY Recycling Inc., established in London in 1991, is one of the few facilities in the province that recycles large-scale construction and demolition debris, turning it into commercial products such as compost, topsoil, gravel and wood chips that are 100 per cent recycled. More than 98 per cent of the materials delivered to their depots are recycled, reused and redistributed. For more information, visit www.tryrecycling.com.

Demolition of the Erie Street United Church, Ridgetown, January 21, 2009. Photo courtesy of Adriaan Gebuis.

Rebirth of the Wychwood Barns

By Joe Lobko and Megan Torza

Photo courtesy of du Toit Architects Limited

The Artscape Wychwood Barns – near St. Clair Avenue West and Bathurst Street in Toronto – were created when five historic streetcar maintenance barns were transformed into a community hub for artists and environmental groups, developed by Toronto Artscape Inc. in partnership with the City of Toronto and the Stop Community Food Network.

The first barn was constructed in Toronto's developing west end in 1913 to serve as a storage, repair and maintenance facility for the burgeoning Toronto Civic Railway. Additional barns were added in 1916 and 1921 as both the city and the urban railway system grew. At one time, the barns served 167 streetcars servicing 10 routes, providing employment for hundreds of workers. The Toronto Transit Commission closed the facility in 1985 due to the diminished role of streetcars in this part of the city. The buildings have been unoccupied since.

The five existing barns, totalling about one quarter of the overall 4.3-acre site, they were adapted in the context of a proposed park setting, which was designed and implemented – with community input – by the Toronto Parks Department. The site provides over 53,000 square feet of valuable and affordable live/work and housing for the community, while reintegrating the historic structures into the surrounding residential neighbourhood. The total project cost was $21 million.

Within an overall discipline of environmental sustainability, the four barns accommodate a range of uses, including 26 affordable live/work units and 15 work-only units, for the arts community; a publicly accessible, multi-purpose covered street, encompassing the entire, original 1913 barn; a community barn accommodating offices and studio space for a range of community arts and environmental organizations; and a green barn, including an all-season greenhouse, sheltered garden, bake oven, compost demonstration area, community kitchen and classroom. The fifth barn was partially demolished and recreated as a porch connecting the project with the park beyond.

Environmental features integral to the building's function include a geothermal energy system installed in the adjacent park, a rainwater cistern that harvests water to flush 100 per cent of the building's toilets, low-flow plumbing fixtures, heat recovery and energy efficient lighting throughout. Any new materials include a high recycled material content.

The building's rich history is highlighted with signs and interpretation that include historic photographs, original machinery and signs throughout the public areas. The path of the historic railroad tracks is evident in distinctive paving across the park and through the buildings. A community recognition wall, donor wall and community notice board are also provided and continually updated to reflect the ties the project has developed and maintained with the surrounding community.

Since the project's public opening in November 2008, a weekly farmers' market has been initiated, performances within the two theatres have been sold out, and the greenhouse plantings have begun to flourish. All of the live/work and work studios are filled, and the community offices are thriving. The sharing of ideas between artists, actors, gardeners and storytellers has already begun and will most likely represent the project's most lucrative byproduct.

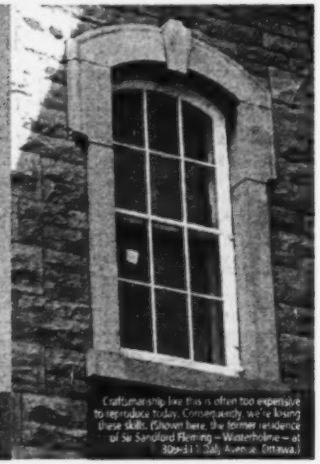
Joe Lobko is a partner with du Toit Architects Limited and the lead architect of the Artscape Wychwood Barns project. Megan Torza is an associate architect at du Toit Architects and has been involved in the Barns project since 2005.

Discarding the past

By L.A. (Sandy) Smallwood

Smallwood calculated that saving the Wallis House (shown here) diverted the equivalent of 500,000 blue bags of demolition debris from landfill.

Restored wood-frame windows can provide superior R-value to most modern vinyl or aluminum replacements. (Shown here, the lobby of The Strathmore Apartments, 404 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa.)



Craftsmanship like this is often too expensive to reproduce today. Consequently, we're losing these skills. (Shown here, the former residence of Sir Sandford Fleming – Waterhouse – at 300-311 Sally Avenue, Ottawa.)

When an old building is torn down, we lose more than just the structure. We lose a bit of our past.

The foundation walls and roof of every building represent manufactured products that used resources harvested from our environment. When a building is demolished, these products are often sent to landfill. But with many pre-1960s buildings, the materials they're built with are far superior to those found in more recent structures. Older buildings often contain wood that came from old-growth forests – this wood is no longer available and, once it joins our landfill, is gone forever.

Older foundations were frequently constructed of hand-cut limestone, a process so labour-intensive that even the most expensive houses today can no longer afford to use it. The list goes on, these products (and the processes to make them) are largely too expensive and, in some cases, simply no longer available.

So, why do we throw our old buildings away? Why do we fill our dumpsters with irreplaceable materials? The reasons people cite are many.

- Esthetic – architectural styles fall from fashion after 20 years
- Economics – it is believed that it's cheaper to demolish a building than to upgrade it to meet market and code demands
- Functional obsolescence – purpose-built structures (e.g., churches) can be difficult to adapt for new uses
- Building codes – it is believed, for example, that fire codes favour new buildings over old
- Energy efficiency – the desire to have a so-called "green building"

The last two issues on this list merit particular attention. Building codes are constantly changing. There is often a perception that a building that no longer conforms, as a result of a code change, is no longer safe. With respect to fire codes specifically, there is no doubt that we safely avoid critical concerns. But are old buildings less safe than new ones?

According to a recent study, people had as little as three minutes to flee a fire under certain conditions – compared to 17 minutes in a similar 1975 test. Several reasons that could have caused this significant reduction – in particular, modern furnishings made of more synthetic materials, and the replacement of wood, heavy plaster and stone with plastics, drywall and other synthetic materials. In addition, the change in construction to the use of lightweight framing – particularly for roof construction – has led to roofs collapsing after approximately 23 minutes compared to 38 minutes experienced during 1985 tests. Based on this information, it would appear that more lives could be saved if codes instead concentrated on ensuring that building contents and new construction techniques/materials meet maximum fire-spread ratings, as these appear to play a far greater role in occupancy safety than the age of the structure.

Furthermore, a trend in recent years has been the pursuit of energy efficient buildings. This pursuit has had an unintentionally negative impact on many older structures. There is a perception that to create something green means we must build something new. The reality, however, supports the fact that – in many cases – older buildings offer more opportunities and can often out-perform new structures. A properly maintained solid masonry building that has passed from a door depressurization test can be made as efficient as a new building. Just seal the leaks and add insulation. Similarly, properly maintained wood windows can last indefinitely. With new wet technology, it is now possible to add interior storm units to get around the annual chore of changing storm windows.

It should come as no surprise that wood remains a better insulator than either aluminum or vinyl. And yet, many new LEED-certified buildings are constructed using glass wall exterior cladding systems that normally provide an R-value of 3.5. Compared to an uninsulated masonry wall with an R-value of 7, it becomes clear that sealed glass wall systems that have a relatively short lifespan before the seals fail are not the way to go.

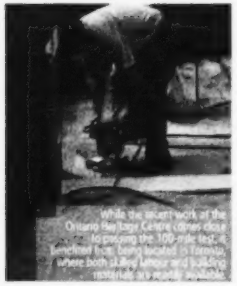
What can be done to change the mindset that relegates so many of our old buildings to landfill? Certainly, more work needs to be done to ensure that building codes recognize and give credit to the benefits provided by traditional construction methods and materials. All levels of government must also recognize the importance of saving existing structures through tax incentives.

The positive contribution made to the environment in saving heritage structures also speaks to the current economic incentives of governments worldwide. Environmental surcharges should also be levied on all development applications that include demolition – as well as providing credits in the permit process for all structures maintained and reused (as well as reusing building materials). Zoning bylaws need to be changed, too, to better protect existing structures instead of providing further incentive to demolish. Of course, our default position should be no demolition. Period. Instead of discarding our past.

L.A. (Sandy) Smallwood is the President of Andrew Holdings and has been restoring old buildings since 1973. He is also a Board member with the Ontario Heritage Trust.

GUEST COLUMNIST

100-MILE CONSERVATION


While the recent work at the Ontario Heritage Centre comes close to passing the 100-mile test, it benefited from being located in Toronto, where both skilled labour and building materials are readily available.

Increasingly, people are becoming more aware of not just what they eat, but where their food originates. While the concept is by no means new, it was popularized in 2005 with the "100-mile diet," which challenged individuals to eat food produced within a 100-mile radius of their homes.

Proponents of the local food movement consider this concept worthwhile for many reasons. Food produced locally has less distance to travel than the imported competition. It is often fresher, healthier and better tasting. A shorter distance from field to table also reduces pollution emissions. And supporting area farmers provides a boost to the local economy and helps our existing agricultural areas remain viable in the face of a globalized agricultural economy.

Eating locally requires more thought, planning, preparation and creativity than simply going to the supermarket. To acquire this food means going to farmers' markets and specialty shops, or even growing it yourself. Buying from your local farmers' market or butcher shop is more personal and allows you to ask questions. Where did this come from? Was it grown with pesticides? How was this cattle raised? Eating locally also respects seasonal cycles of availability and regional variation. Even if strict adherence is not always possible, a 100-mile diet is a useful lens through which we can view how our food choices affect our health, the economy and the environment.

But what if we apply the "100-mile" lens to building conservation? The 100-mile diet and building conservation both emphasize careful use of resources, understanding of location and reduced toxicity. Just as there are obvious environmental benefits to eating locally, there are ecological advantages to re-using old buildings – and the materials within them.

As Carl Elefante, an American specialist and practitioner in the sustainable architecture field, puts it: "the greenest building is the one that is already built." For years, conservationists have been using the term "embodied energy" to help make the case for saving heritage buildings. Buildings are repositories of energy. It takes energy to manufacture or extract building materials, in addition to transporting them to a construction site, and still more energy to assemble them into a building. All of that energy is embodied in the finished structure, and if the structure is demolished and dumped in a landfill, the energy that went into making that building is wasted.

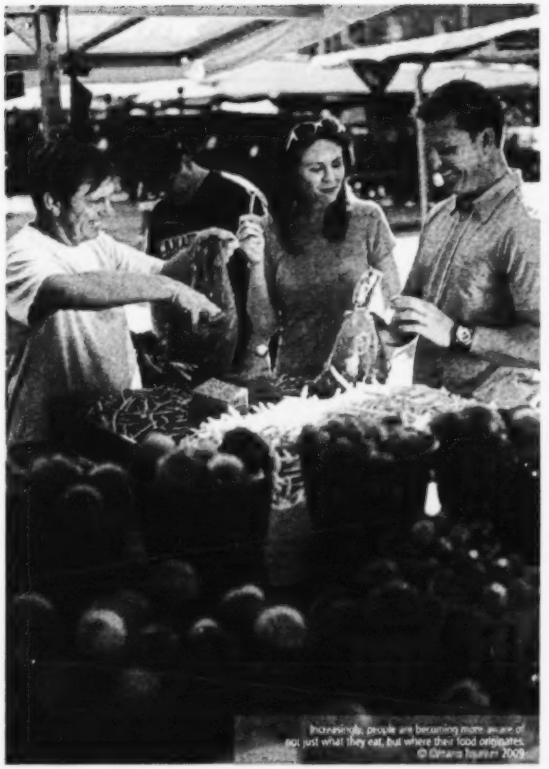
In addition, the process of demolition uses energy, as does the construction of a replacement building. The idea of embodied energy as it relates to the built-environment field has been around since at least 1976, when Bruce Hannon and Richard Stein calculated how many BTUs were used to produce various modern building materials. They went on to determine that the typical building of the mid-20th century required the equivalent of 15 gallons of gasoline per square foot.

Like the 100-mile diet, the choice to invest in conserving a building rather than demolishing it contributes more directly and significantly to the local economy. A lower percentage of the project budget is dedicated to materials, with the majority going toward skilled labour.

Recent alterations to the offices in the Ontario Heritage Centre illustrate these ideas. By making only small, non-structural modifications to the original floor plan, the costs for renovation and materials were minimized. Instead, the project invested in restoring what already existed. Modern wall-to-wall carpeting was pulled up, exposing the building's original hardwood floors. Overall, the original maple was in good condition, but had experienced wear and tear and damage from adhesives and water. The specialized labour required to rehabilitate the wood floors was local. Likewise, the trim and hardware found in the building were restored. The small amount of new wood inserted and spliced into the original floor was harvested and milled in York Region, within a 100-mile radius of Toronto. Approximately 90 per cent of the project budget was for labour, while only 10 per cent was spent on materials – well below the traditional 50/50 split.

While the recent work at the Ontario Heritage Centre comes close to passing the 100-mile test, it benefited from being located in Toronto, where both skilled labour and building materials are readily available. A conservation project in a remote location might benefit from having local materials, but may not have a local tradesperson. In other cases, a conservation project may have ready access to skilled workers, but find it hard to acquire local stone, brick or timber.

Just as the 100-mile lens is being used to question and improve our food systems, the heritage conservation sector might use the 100-mile approach as a new way to look at architectural conservation. Food for thought.


Increasingly, people are becoming more aware of not just what they eat, but where their food originates. © Ontario Tourism 2009

Laura Hatcher is the Places of Worship Planner with the Ontario Heritage Trust.

WHAT'S ON . . .

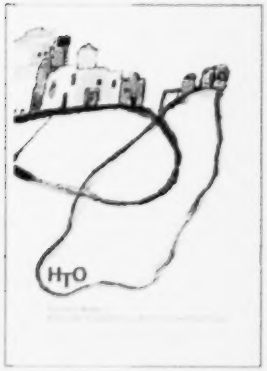
. . . the shelf

The Shield, part of the Ontario Visual Heritage Project

Over thousands of years, a select few have carved out lives for themselves amid the rocks of the Canadian Shield. From the Anishinabek, to free-land grant settlers, to industrialists, this four-disc documentary series explores the history of those seeking opportunity just beyond the familiar, on the edge of the unknown North.

Shot in 1080i high definition and mastered in widescreen DVD, this new DVD set includes over eight hours of interviews, re-enactments of historical events, stunning nature photography, thousands of historical photographs and films as well as maps and 3D animations.

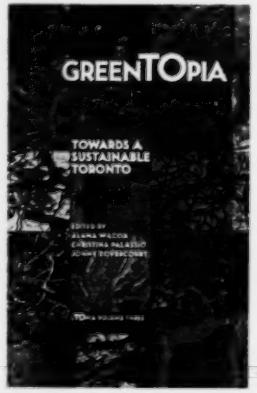
The set includes "Life on the Edge" – Stories from Muskoka's Past, "Rooted in Stone" – Reflections on What Terry Sawchuk's Poet, "Letters Reopens Our Stories" – Stories from Greater Sudbury, and "Island of Great Spirit" – The Legacy of Manitoulin Island. Available now at www.visualheritage.ca, individual DVDs are $20 and the box set is $70. All proceeds go to further the non-profit Ontario Visual Heritage Project in other areas.



HTO: Toronto's Water from Lake Iroquois to Lost Rivers to Low-flow Toilets, edited by Christina Palassio and Wayne Reeves.

Coach House Books. Drained by a half-dozen major watersheds, cut by a network of deep ravines and fronting on a Great Lake, Toronto is a city dominated by water. Recently, the trend of fettering Toronto's water and putting it underground has been countered by persistent citizen-led efforts to recall and restore the city's surface water. In *HTO: Toronto's Water from Lake Iroquois to Lost Rivers to Low-flow Toilets*, 34 contributors examine the ever-changing interplay between nature and culture, and call into question the city's past, present and future engagement with water.

HTO explores everything from waste disposal, waterfront reclamation and community watershed initiatives to the founding of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority after Hurricane Hazel, a psychogeographic exploration of High Level Pumping Station and a critical look at the city's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan. In between, there are descriptions of Toronto's geological past, the history of Taddle Creek and a Bangkok-style tale of infiltration of the city's storm sewers, complete with supporting images. Together, these essays provide context for a critical observation of the city's relationship to water, and how that relationship will have to change in the coming decades.



GreenTOpia: Towards a Sustainable Toronto, edited by Alana Wilcox, Christina Palassio and Jenny Ravercourt.

Coach House Books. What would make Toronto a greener place?

This third book in the *uTOpia* series asked imaginative Torontonians to think both big and small about how we might make our city more environmentally wise and responsible. They responded with immodest proposals and how-to tips, thoughtful considerations and flights of fancy that just might work. They wrote essays long and short, taking stock of how far we've come in the struggle to green ourselves and providing suggestions for simple actions with big effects. Their ideas – sometimes playful, sometimes pie-in-the-sky – offer brazen new perspectives on transportation, garbage, trees, energy, water, animals and green space and arrive at imaginative and ingenious solutions to the problems plaguing all modern cities. *GreenTOpia* features a resources section, including profiles of key eco-friendly groups in the GTA, a directory of green organizations, as well as a how-to guide and a fun-facts section.

In the coming months . . .

The Ontario Heritage Trust regularly hosts or attends events that impact our rich and unique heritage. From provincial plaque unveilings to conferences, we are busy year-round with activities that promote heritage conservation in Ontario.

Here are some of the events and activities occurring over the next few months. Visit our website at www.heritagetrust.on.ca for more details!

May 29-31, 2009 – Ontario Heritage Conference 2009, Peterborough. This year's conference – Heritage in Creative Communities – is jointly sponsored by the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario and Community Heritage Ontario, with funding from the Ontario Heritage Trust. It will take place at Trent University and at various heritage sites in the downtown area.

May 31, 2009 – As part of the **1000 Islands Jazz Festival's Heritage Jazz Series** in Brockville, Fulford Place will host an intimate concert showcasing some of Canada's rising jazz stars.

June 6 to August 30, 2009 – Barnum House opens for the summer season, Grafton. Open June, July and August, Wednesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

June 10, 2009 – Provincial plaque unveiling to commemorate the Sydenham Public School, Kingston.

Edward Blake (Premier 1871-72). Photo courtesy of the Archives of Ontario

June 13, 2009 – Premiers' Gravesites Program marker unveiling commemorating The Honourable Edward Blake at Toronto's St. James Cemetery.

Mid-June to the end of August 2009 – Homewood Museum in Maitland opens for the summer season – enjoy tours and special events. Open Wednesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

June 25, 2009 – Premiers' Gravesites Program marker unveiling to commemorate The Honourable Arthur Sturgis Hardy in Brantford.

June 29 to July 10 – Adventures in Archaeology at the Spadina Museum: Historic House & Gardens, Toronto. For more information, visit www.torontoparks.toronto.on.

Summer 2009 – Provincial plaque unveiling commemorating The Honourable George A. Drew, Guelph.

July 15, 2009 – Provincial plaque unveiling to commemorate the founding of Latchford.

August 1, 2009 – Emancipation Day celebrations at Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site, Dresden. For more information, visit www.uncletomscabin.org.

August 10 to 14, 2009 – Adventures in Archaeology Summer Day Camp at Homewood Museum, Maitland.

August 20, 2009 – The Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre hosts Kidsummer. Guided theatre tours and activities will be offered for children and their families. The event will take place from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free refreshments and snacks provided.

August 20, 2009 – Provincial plaque unveiling to commemorate The Rivers and Streams Act of 1884, McDonalds Corners.

September 17, 2009 – Provincial plaque unveiling to commemorate the Holland's Landing Depot, East Gwillimbury.

September 24, 2009 – Provincial plaque unveiling to commemorate Robert Nichol, Port Dover.

September 24-26, 2009 – The Heritage Canada Foundation's Annual Conference, Toronto, in collaboration with the Ontario Heritage Trust and in cooperation with the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals. This year's theme is "The Heritage Imperative: Old buildings in an age of environmental crisis." Climate change, green building and economic renewal – older buildings have answers for the biggest questions of our generation.

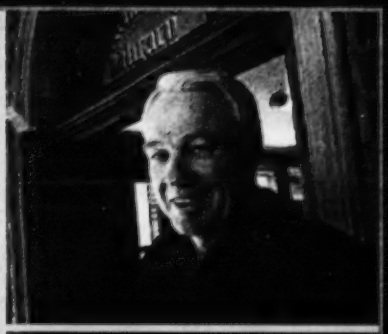
For Doors Open Ontario events throughout the summer, visit www.doorsopenontario.on.ca. Information about Trails Ontario activities are listed at www.heritagetrust.on.ca.

Recognizing Contributions to Heritage Conservation

The Ontario Heritage Trust's annual Young Heritage Leaders, Heritage Community Recognition and Community Leadership programs, as well as the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Awards, celebrate achievements in preserving, protecting and promoting heritage.

To learn more about how to nominate an individual, group or community, visit **www.heritagetrust.on.ca** or e-mail reception@heritagetrust.on.ca.

The nomination deadline for this year's programs is July 17, 2009.



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The Heritage Imperative:
Old Buildings in an Age of Environmental Crisis

The Heritage Canada Foundation's Annual Conference
in collaboration with the Ontario Heritage Trust and in cooperation with the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals

September 24-26, 2009
Fairmont Royal York Hotel
TORONTO

For sponsorship opportunities, conference program and online registration visit www.heritagecanada.org .